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Faculty Profile: Dr. Gregory C. Griffeth, DVM, DACVD

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Name: Dr. Gregory C. Griffeth

Birthplace: Athens, Georgia

Position: Staff Dermatologist, Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital

Research interests: *Staphylococcus* and *Pseudomonas* infections, novel antimicrobial therapy in small animals

Beginnings: Owning a menagerie of animals all your life has its effects. It was through that ownership that Dr. Griffeth, a native of Athens, GA, first became interested in pursuing the field of veterinary medicine as a career.

Before entering veterinary school, Dr. Griffeth was a graduate student in molecular biology and immunology. And it was during his clinical rotations in vet school that he was particularly drawn to dermatology and allergy. Post-doctoral studies continued for Dr. Griffeth at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine's Teaching Hospital, as well as at Penn Veterinary Medicine's Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital. He was then appointed a staff veterinarian at Ryan Hospital.

"Allergies often manifest as skin and ear problems in dogs, cats and horses," he said. "As a result, dermatologists have become the de facto allergists and otologists in veterinary medicine. Chronically itchy ears are an especially pervasive problem in dogs, and effective treatment requires more time and equipment than most general practitioners have. One of my goals is to explore the possibility of opening an ear disease center at Penn Vet to address this issue."

Dr. Griffeth takes on clinical cases in addition to teaching dermatology. "At least half of all animals seen in small animal clinics have a dermatology problem," said Dr. Griffeth. "These are often complex problems to diagnose and treat, consuming a great deal of time for the general practitioner. One of our primary goals is to help students become strong diagnosticians."

He emphasizes to his students the importance of looking at the whole situation surrounding the animal they are seeing.

"You have to find a balance between the animal's lifestyle and the owner's lifestyle," says Dr. Griffeth. "In some cases, we see working animals such as police dogs and guide dogs. If a physical condition keeps them from doing their job or presents a risk to their health and their owner's health, that is a major problem and we need to find a solution. At the same time, we don't want



Photo by John Doriges

the treatment to be worse than the disease. I encourage students and residents to find a balanced approach and be wise in their decision making."

Dr. Griffeth enjoys sharing his knowledge with students. "Teaching is an intellectual fountain of youth," he said. "Students are so eager to learn and start treating patients. Their enthusiasm rubs off on me every day."

Life at Penn: 2005-2007: Resident in dermatology and allergy, MJR-VHUP at Penn Vet. 2009: Joined Penn Vet as staff dermatologist and faculty member.

Recent Publications:

Griffeth GC, Morris DO, Abraham JL *et al.* Screening for skin carriage of methicillin-resistant coagulase-positive staphylococci and *Staphylococcus schleiferi* in dogs with healthy and inflamed skin. *Veterinary Dermatology* 19: 142-9, 2008.

Abraham JL, Morris DO, Griffeth GC *et al.* Surveillance of healthy cats and cats with inflammatory skin disease for colonization of the skin by methicillin-resistant coagulase-positive staphylococci and *Staphylococcus schleiferi* sp. *schleiferi*. *Veterinary Dermatology* 18: 252-9, 2007.

What's next?

Staphylococcal adherence

Pseudomonas biofilms

Novel uses for old and unusual antibiotics